

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1. (*Currently Amended*) A leaf guard for directing water into a gutter while preventing debris from entering the gutter, comprising:

an elongated sheet of material having:

a substantially planar portion, a roof-side edge and ~~one or more rows at least a first row and an adjacent second row~~ of elongated slits defined in said planar portion;

wherein each of said first and second rows of elongated slits is are substantially parallel to said roof-side edge; and

wherein each one of said elongated slits is oriented substantially perpendicular to said roof-side edge, and each slit of said first row is offset from the corresponding slit of the adjacent second row in a direction parallel to the roof edge.

Claims 2 and 3 (*Canceled*)

Claim 4. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 1, wherein each of said elongated slits is bounded by a first side of material and an opposite second side of material, wherein said first side of material slopes upward and said second side of material slopes downward.

Claim 5. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 4, wherein each of said elongated slits of the same row have first and second sides of material that slope in the same direction.

Claim 6. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 1, wherein said elongated sheet of material is constructed of a metal selected from the group consisting of aluminum, steel, copper and enamel coated aluminum.

Claim 7. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 1, wherein each of said elongated slits is between 1/2 inch and 2 inches in length.

Claim 8. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 1, wherein said elongated sheet of material further includes a curved nose portion that curves inwardly beneath said substantially planar portion.

Claims 9 and 10 (*Canceled*)

Claim 11. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 8, wherein said curved nose section is adapted to hang above the outside rim of a gutter such that a gap of between about 1/4 inch and about 1/2 inch is formed between said curved nose section and said outside rim of the gutter.

Claim 12 (*Canceled*)

Claim 13. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 1, wherein said elongated sheet of material further includes a inwardly bent connection portion adjacent said roof-side edge, wherein said inwardly bent connection portion is adapted for attachment to a vertical support structure.

Claim 14. (*Original*) The leaf guard according to claim 1, wherein each of said elongated slits is separated from each immediately adjacent elongated slit by a distance of between about 1/4 inch and about 1 inch.

Claim 15. (*Currently Amended*) A leaf guard for directing water into a gutter while preventing debris from entering the gutter, comprising:

an elongated sheet of material ~~having~~: including a substantially planar portion; portion, a roof-side edge, and a curved nose portion;

~~one or more rows of elongated slits defined in said planar portion defining at least one row of elongated slits~~, wherein said elongated slits are oriented substantially perpendicular to said roof-side edge;

~~an inwardly bent a connection portion adapted adjacent the roof-side edge, said connection portion being a bent extension of said roof-side edge~~

wherein said inwardly bent extension of said connection portion is adapted for attachment to a vertical support structure;

a said curved nose portion is opposite said inwardly bent extension of said connection portion, said curved nose portion extending, in an arc, downwardly and underneath said planar portion.

Claim 16. (*Currently Amended*) The leaf guard according to claim 15, wherein said at least one or more rows row of elongated slits include includes at least two rows of elongated slits and wherein each of slits, said rows of elongated slits are substantially parallel to said roof-side edge.

Claim 17. (*Currently Amended*) The leaf guard according to claim 16, wherein each of said elongated slits is bounded by a first side of said planar material on a first side, and an opposite second side of material, side;

wherein said first side of planar material slopes upward on said first side, and said second side of planar material slopes downward, and wherein on said second side;

whereby said planar material on said first and second sides of each of said elongated slits of the same row have first and second sides of material that slope in the same direction, respectively.

Claims 18-20 (*Canceled*)

Claim 21. (*New*) A leaf guard for directing water into, and preventing debris from entering a gutter, comprising:

an elongated sheet of material having a substantial planar portion between first and second ends defining a forward edge and a rearward edge;

said substantially planar portion also defining a plurality of elongated slits arranged in a plurality of rows along said planar portion between said first and second ends, and said forward and rearward edges;

wherein each of said plurality of rows are substantially parallel to said rearward edge;

each one of said elongated slits is oriented substantially perpendicular to said rearward edge;

each one of said elongated slits is bounded by said planar material on a first side and an opposite second side, said first and second sides extend in a direction parallel to said first and second ends;

said material on said first side has an upward slope, and on said second side has a downward slope;

whereby said material on each said first and said second sides of said elongated slits of each one of said plurality of rows slope in the same direction, respectively.

Claim 22. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 21, wherein said plurality of rows includes at least two adjacent rows of elongated slits.

Claim 23. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 22, wherein of said at least two adjacent rows of elongated slits are offset from each other in a direction parallel to said forward edge.

Claim 24. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 21, wherein each of said elongated slits is between 1/2 inch and 2 inches in length.

Claim 25. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 21, wherein said forward edge includes a curved nose portion, formed substantially beneath said substantially planar portion.

Claim 26. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 25, wherein said curved nose portion is adapted to hang above an outside rim of a gutter;

whereby a gap in the range from about 1/4 inch to about 1/2 inch is formed between said curved nose section and the outside rim of the gutter.

Claim 27. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 21, wherein said rearward edge includes a connection portion;

whereby said connection portion is adapted for attachment to a vertical support structure above a gutter.

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Claim 28. (*New*) The leaf guard according to claim 21, wherein each one of said elongated slits is separated from each immediately adjacent elongated slit by a distance in the range including 1/4 inch and to one inch.